

Commander's Comments



*Lt. Col. Raymond G. Midkiff
District Engineer*

Hello to everyone. A lot has happened since our last edition of the RipRap. As of July 19, the South Pacific Division has a new Commander. Col. (P) Larry Davis assumed command of the division and Brig. Gen. Peter Madsen moved on to take command of the South Atlantic Division in Atlanta, Ga. Many of you remember Col. (P) Davis – he's the former Commander of the Los Angeles District. Col. (P) Davis will be out to visit with us sometime later this summer or early fall. Sacramento and Los Angeles Districts also have new commanders. Col. Mike Conrad is now in command at Sacramento and Col. Dick Thompson heads Los Angeles District. Col. Thompson was formerly the Commander of San Francisco District. Welcome to all three new commanders!

The frequent rotation of our military leadership within the Corps of Engineers helps illustrate an important point. While we "green suits" come and go, the strength and continuity of this organization is all of you. Your dedicated and professional service to the Army and this Nation is what makes this a special organization. In June, we held our Length of Service awards' ceremony at the District Headquarters. I am always awed at these events when I see folks getting certificates for 20, 30, 35, and even 40 years of service (you 35 and 40-year folks know who you are)!

On July 3, the Albuquerque District experienced a quadruple drowning at John Martin Reservoir in Colorado. Three small children and a middle-aged woman were lost. What caused this tragic event? The answer is an overloaded boat with no floatation devices and an inexperienced operator, allegedly under the influence of alcohol. I visited John Martin on July 5 during the search efforts for the last victim – a six-year-old girl – and I am extremely proud of the way our project staff responded to this terrible incident.

The quick response by the John Martin staff, Colorado State Parks Department, and local boaters saved the lives of six of the 10 people on this boat. One of our staff members performed CPR on a small boy who survived the accident. The John Martin staff, with the assistance of Colorado State Parks Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the County Sheriff's office quickly set up a joint command post and with the help of volunteers initiated search efforts for the body of the six-year-old girl. The final victim was recovered early on the morning of July 7. The cooperation between the various agencies and the dedication, professionalism and sense of urgency of everyone involved was impressive.

I wanted to share this experience with you to remind you that our business is more than just the execution of our civil and military design and construction programs. The dedicated rangers and project staff at our lake offices have a tough mission that includes dealing with unfortunate and needless accidents such as this one from time to time. For most of the American public, the staff we have at our lakes are the only representatives of the Corps of Engineers they will ever meet. I want to assure you that we have a great team "out front" for us at our lake projects.

Until next time, thanks to all of you for your continued exceptional service to our Army and Nation.

Ray Midkiff

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